

Lauritzen Yacht Harbor

FOOT OF ANTIOCH BRIDGE

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Serving the boating public since 1959

January 19, 1996

To: Margit Aramburu, Executive Director
Delta Protection Commission

From: Chris Lauritzen, Partner
Lauritzen Yacht Harbor

Subject: Abandoned Vessels in Delta Waterways

Since I cannot attend your January 25th meeting I would like to send you some written comments on the subject of abandoned vessels.

I have been the Harbor Master at Lauritzen Yacht Harbor since 1972 and I have watched the problem of abandoned boats grow.

There is no agency at any level that has the money to get rid of these abandoned vessels.

I can think of three junker boats in the Antioch Bridge area. One is a 30 plus foot trimaran sailboat that has been beached on the North side of West Island on the San Joaquin River. That boat has no mast. All of the marine hardware that was worth anything was striped off the boat long ago. The boat has been there for over five years.

There is a 38 foot Riverqueen houseboat on the right side of the channel leading into Big Break marina. The houseboat had a boat fire, the passengers were taken off safely at the time of the fire. The boat has been striped of anything of value. At low tide, all that is showing is the hull of the boat. The vessel is still where it sank because the boat owner didn't have any insurance. That was seven or eight years ago.

At Horseshoe Bend on the Sacramento River is a wooden barge that sank over seven years ago. The size of the barge is approximately 35'x90' with a wooden deck structure on it. Not only is this junker an eye sore, but a navigational hazard for the unsuspecting night boater as well.

I could go on about these junkers in Contra Costa alone. I would estimate there are probably at least 200 vessels just in Contra Costa.

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As you have mentioned, gaining title for disposal of these junkers for law enforcement is a major problem. A more important problem is the cost of disposing of them. I don't know of any County or City that wants to pay for the removal and disposal of these junkers.

I have done some salvage over the years. Based on this experience it seems that even the easiest to remove can be expensive. To salvage an abandoned vessel that is floating and towable is relatively easy. However, you still have to deal with expensive land salvage costs. If the vessel has sunk, additional equipment is required to raise it and move it to the salvage site. In either case, once you have the vessel on land the costs of disposal can be very significant. frequently, oil, gasoline and toxic paints and other toxic materials are found on these vessels. Total costs can run \$10,000 to \$15,000.

There are many problems associated with the disposal of these junkers. Many of them have been in the water for years. Trying to move them may cause them to breakup creating further problems. Many have holes in them. In those cases, a diver would be used to put lift bags around the vessel so it could be refloated and taken to a salvage site. Some may have serious damage from wind and currents. They may be constructed of wood, fiberglass, aluminum or steel.

Once the vessel has been placed on dry land disposal is difficult and expensive. The dismantler has to be concerned about hazardous materials issues. Is there an engine in the boat and does it have crankcase oil? Is there a fuel tank with gasoline or diesel fuel? Is there toxic bottom paint? These factors can drive disposal costs up dramatically.

Why should we care about these abandoned vessels? They are an eyesore, they are a detriment to the environment and they are frequently a hazard to navigation.

One obvious problem is that the County marine patrols of the Delta need some tools to deal with this problem. We don't want the Delta to turn into a dumping ground for people who can't afford to get rid of their boat in a lawful manner.

Thank you very much for your time.

Very truly yours,

C. A. Lauritzen III